

Arts center construction starts

By John Chaffee
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DUXBURY — Although groundbreaking ceremonies were held last May, actual construction of the \$2.5 million Ellison Center for the Arts did not begin until yesterday.

"This is the real thing," said James Simpson, director of the South Shore Conservatory, as he watched a bulldozer demolish the former Holy Family Church rectory at the corner of St. George and Cedar streets.

In place of the rectory, a two-story addition will be built on to the red-brick former church building, which the music conservatory purchased from the Archdiocese of Boston for \$375,000.

"We expect to be in by Sept. 1," said Michael Puzo, president of the board of trustees of the Hingham-based conservatory.

Simpson said the two-story addition will include a basement to house percussion studios.

There will be classrooms on the ground floor

Conservatory expects to be in place Sept. 1

Duxbury

and studios for the Duxbury Art Association on the top floor, Simpson said.

The Ellison Center is a joint venture of the conservatory and the art association, Puzo said.

"The idea was to assemble a regional center for the visual and performing arts in one place," he said, "and this was a wonderful way to bring the visual arts into our facility."

The conservatory will continue to offer classes in music, singing and dance, Simpson said, while the arts association will provide instruction in painting, sculpture and pottery.

The new facility will be able to serve more than

twice the 500 students currently enrolled in Ellison Center programs now being conducted in rented quarters nearby, Simpson said.

In addition, he said, the new center will offer an arts-oriented preschool program similar to one currently in operation at the main campus in Hingham.

Puza noted that the Ellison Center will provide the leaching field for the Bluefish River shared septic disposal project. It will be located under the parking lot.

"We have agreed to host the shared septic system that will accommodate not only this building but three neighboring residential facilities with septic problems that have caused pollution of the Bluefish River and forced the closing of its shellfish beds," Puza said.

He said that while \$1.9 million has been raised for the Ellison Center so far, an additional \$600,000 is needed to complete the project.

"The public phase of the fund-raising campaign is in full swing," Puza said.